

YEAR 11 · EXAM GUIDANCE

Paper 1

The listening exam, from A to Z.

Structure · Question types · Timings · Tips that score marks.

AQA 8692 · June 2026 onwards

Why this paper matters.

25%

of your final GCSE

Same weight as Speaking, Reading and Writing.
Every mark on this paper is worth gold.

Tested in English

All questions and responses in English.

No dictionaries

Not at any point — including reading time.

Studio recording

Native speakers, clear, moderate pace.

Five-week speaking window

But Paper 1 is sat in the formal exam slot.
Dress for the marathon, not the sprint.

40 marks · 35 minutes.

40

Raw marks

35

Minutes total

32

Section A marks

8

Section B marks

SECTION A · LISTENING COMPREHENSION

32 marks

All questions in English; answers in English or non-verbal.
Range of question types and source genres.
Each item heard **twice** with built-in reading and answering pauses.

SECTION B · DICTATION

8 marks (4 AO1 + 4 AO3)

Minimum 20 words to write down in Spanish.
Two words from outside the vocab list.
Each sentence heard **three times**: full, in chunks, full again.

50 marks · 45 minutes.

50

Raw marks

45

Minutes total

40

Section A marks

10

Section B marks

SECTION A · LISTENING COMPREHENSION

40 marks

All questions in English; answers in English or non-verbal.
Longer pieces, more opinion + inference, more detail.
Each item heard **twice**.

SECTION B · DICTATION

10 marks (5 AO1 + 5 AO3)

Minimum 30 words to write down in Spanish.
Two words from outside the vocab list.
Each sentence heard **three times**: full, in chunks, full again.

Side by side.

FOUNDATION

HIGHER

	FOUNDATION	HIGHER
Total marks	40	50
Total time	35 minutes	45 minutes
Reading time at start	5 minutes	5 minutes
Checking time at end	2 minutes	2 minutes
Section A • comprehension	32 marks	40 marks
Section B • dictation	8 marks	10 marks
Dictation length (min words)	20 words	30 words
Items repeated	Twice (3× in dictation)	Twice (3× in dictation)

What you'll actually hear.

*Different genres, different audiences, different registers.
Formal and informal, in equal measure.*



Announcements

Stations, shops, airports,
schools.



Short conversations

Friends, family, shopkeepers,
doctors.



Bulletins

News, weather, traffic, sports
updates.



Podcasts

Interviews, opinions, longer
descriptions.



Spoken descriptions

Someone describing a place,
person or routine.

Read first. Listen second. Answer last.



READ

Before the audio plays, read the questions. Underline the question word — Who? What? When? Where? Why? How many? Note any quantifiers: 'mention TWO things'.



LISTEN

Listen to the WHOLE clip first time. Don't try to write yet. Get the gist, the speaker's mood and the rough timeline. On the second play, target the specific answer.



ANSWER

Write the answer in English, in full enough words to be unambiguous. Numbers as digits. Use the built-in pause to write tidily.

Three passes, three jobs.

You hear each sentence three times. Each play is for a different job.

FIRST PASS

Full sentence

Listen, don't write.
Get the whole meaning. Mentally note: tense, person, register.

SECOND PASS

Broken into chunks

Write fast.
Use abbreviations if you need to. Capture every word — accents matter for AO3.

THIRD PASS

Full sentence again

Check, don't rewrite.
Fix word order, accents, capital letters, agreement endings.

PITFALL · Two of the words will be **outside the vocab list**. You can still spell them — listen to every syllable.

Spanish spelling rules that win you AO3 marks.

Accent on the last syllable

verbs in past: -é, -í, -ó · words ending in vowel + n/s if stressed on last syllable

Accent on the second-to-last syllable

words ending in consonant other than n/s · except those marked already

ñ vs n

señor not senor. Always check — Spanish makes this distinction in marking.

ll vs y

llamo, calle, ella. Listen for the soft 'y' sound.

b vs v

Sound identical in Spanish. Use vocab knowledge to choose.

c vs z

Listen, but also: ce, ci use 'c'; za, zo, zu use 'z'.

h is silent

But it's still written — hablo, hermana, hora.

¿ and ¡

Open every question with ¿ and every exclamation with ¡.

Reading time is gold. Don't waste it.

5:00

MINUTES

*Reading time at the start.
No audio plays. Your pen can move.*

Notes ARE allowed on the question paper.

WHAT TO DO IN THOSE FIVE MINUTES

✓ **Read every question fully.**

Yes, every single one. Including the dictation instructions.

✓ **Underline the question word.**

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? How many?

✓ **Circle key nouns or numbers.**

If the question asks about 'two reasons', circle the 'two'.

✓ **Predict the vocabulary.**

If the topic is daily routine, jot the verbs you expect: me levanto, desayuno, voy...

✓ **Spot the dictation page.**

Know it's coming. Mentally rehearse the three-pass routine before you hear a word.

What separates the top grade from the rest.

1

Don't write during the first play.

Listen for meaning.

2

Numbers as digits.

Faster, clearer, no spelling risk.

3

Answer the question that's asked.

Detail beyond the question doesn't earn extra marks but extra waffle costs time.

4

Mention both things if asked for two.

Half answer = half marks.

5

Negatives change everything.

Listen for no, nunca, nadie, ningún. They flip the whole meaning.

6

Tense markers matter.

ayer = past · mañana = future · siempre = present.

7

Don't leave a blank.

Educated guesses cost nothing.

8

Quick handwriting matters.

If you can't read it back, the examiner can't either.

9

Use the pauses to write.

They're built in. Don't waste them rereading questions.

10

Keep going on a tough question.

Don't let one item ruin the next five.

What costs marks every year.



Answering in Spanish.

Section A wants answers in English. A perfect Spanish answer scores zero.



Missing the negative.

'No me gusta' and 'me gusta' are opposite answers. Always listen for 'no'.



Confusing similar-sound words.

tres / trece · llevo / llevamos · de la mañana / de la tarde.



Trying to translate every word.

You don't need to. Listen for what the question is asking.



Writing during the first play.

You miss what comes next while writing what just passed.



Skipping accents in dictation.

Accents are part of correct spelling and score AO3 marks.



Leaving blanks.

Examiners can't award marks to nothing. Always commit to an answer.



Running out of time on dictation.

Use the third pass to check, not to start. Get a first attempt in pass two.

Two minutes' checking time. Use them.

2:00

MINUTES

*End-of-test checking time.
No new audio. Your job: catch your own mistakes.*

Worth more marks than you think.

YOUR CHECKING ROUTINE

- **Have you answered every question?**
No blanks. Educated guess if needed.
- **Number of details given?**
If the question says 'two', have you given two?
- **Read each dictation sentence aloud (in your head).**
Does it make sense in Spanish? Do verbs match subjects?
- **Check accents and ñ.**
señor not senor. inglés not ingles.
- **Check capital letters.**
Spanish doesn't capitalise days, months or languages.
- **Make handwriting legible.**
Re-trace any letters that aren't clear.

What helps. What doesn't.

WHAT HELPS

Eat breakfast.

A brain that runs on toast scores more marks than one that runs on nerves.

Listen to one Spanish track at breakfast.

Tune your ear. A NotebookLM overview, a podcast, the news. Anything in Spanish.

Review your flashcards quickly.

Five minutes on the Hillside topic flashcards. Just the words you flagged 'Again'.

Re-read these slides.

Skim the 'mistakes to avoid' page so they're top of mind.

WHAT DOESN'T

Cramming new vocabulary at midnight.

You can't learn 200 new words in twelve hours. Sleep helps more.

Drilling unfamiliar grammar.

If it isn't already there, today won't fix it. Build on what you know.

Comparing notes with classmates.

Their panic is contagious. Stay inside your own head.

Energy drinks.

A pounding heart makes accent marks shake. Water and a banana win.

¡Buena suerte!

You've done the practice. Now do the paper.

READ

the questions in your five minutes

LISTEN

with full attention on the first play

WRITE

carefully on the second play

CHECK

everything in your final two minutes